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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003086

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL SO ET

SUBJECT: SOMALIA: GEDI APPEARS COMMITTED TO STAYING ON

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Deborah Malac for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) Despite looking somber and deflated after two days of consultations with the Ethiopian Government (GoE), Somali Prime Minister Mohammed Gedi appeared committed to maintaining hold on the Prime Ministership in an October 19 meeting with the Charge and Political Chief. Although he would not explicitly comment on whether or not he would resign or otherwise leave office, Gedi spoke of his plans to return to Baidoa tomorrow and to bring an end to the on-going political crisis within the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) within the next few days. Opening the discussion by citing recent terrorist strikes and concluding with "I know that the United States is behind us," Gedi employed obvious counter-terrorism partnership allusions apparently to convince the United States that his continued role is critical to U.S. security interests in the Horn of Africa. He emphasized this by arguing that the "collapse of the TFG would mean the death of the Somali people." End Summary.

GEDI ON WHY WE NEED GEDI

¶2. (S) Prime Minister Gedi requested a meeting with Embassy Addis after nearly two days of consultations with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles, Foreign Minister Seyoum and State Minister Tekeda. Gedi opened the meeting by highlighting recent increased insecurity and expansion of extremist training camps in Somalia. He highlighted recent terrorist strikes and increased extremist activity in Kenya and Djibouti. Gedi argued that the international media links Bush, Meles, and Gedi. "Since the terrorists link us," Gedi stated "we must stick together."

¶3. (S) After opening with security issues, Gedi quickly moved to highlight his role in seeking to build on the results of the National Reconciliation Congress (NRC) and increase inclusiveness in the existing political process. He noted that shortly after the NRC, he met with Somali business leaders in Djibouti, secured their agreement to engage in reconciliation efforts, and returned to Mogadishu with some of these leaders in tow. He highlighted outreach to the Hawiye community and claimed to have succeeded in getting them to recognize that they can contribute to this process.

Gedi also took credit for bringing together elders from the Kismayo area to help resolve tensions between them. Gedi claimed that there is "goodwill on all parts," but progress can only occur if there is a secure environment. The current conflict within the TFG, however, is fueling instability and providing space for terrorists to re-emerge, he said.

MOVING FORWARD

¶4. (S) Charge echoed the argument that the current political infighting within the TFG provides an opening for extremists and those seeking to undermine the TFG and pressed Gedi on how he aimed to resolve that tension. Speaking solely in the future tense and using the "we" pronoun, Gedi argued that upon returning to Baidoa on October 20, the TFG leadership will seek to find a shared solution to the political crisis through dialogue that results in TFG unity. Gedi emphasized that now is not the time for the TFG to divide themselves as that would only provide space for terrorists. While the Charge noted that these times call for difficult decisions and statesmanship by leaders, Gedi punted by responding that "we" will come up with a tangible solution in the next few days.

¶5. (S) Moving beyond the immediate political crisis, the Charge stressed that the TFG must also address how it conducts itself as the existing governing framework for the remainder of the transitional period, noting the USG's commitment to support that process. Gedi acknowledged the issue but refrained from commenting substantively on it, noting instead that "we" must find a solution and plan how our partners can help. He lamented the minimal support from the international community that the TFG has received over

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the past three years, and argued that donors must help the TFG "like parents nurturing young children."

COMMENT

¶6. (S) While Gedi played his cards close to chest and avoided commenting on the question of whether he would resign or press to retain his position, his arguments and word choice seemed to indicate to Post that he has no intention of resigning or taking the "gentleman's way out." Despite his words and tone, however, Gedi certainly did not appear the confident Prime Minister that visited Washington in late June. Instead, what was certainly a frank and direct round of consultations with the GoE left him appearing significantly somber and diminished. After briefing EU ambassadors and the African Union leadership this afternoon, Gedi returns to Baidoa tomorrow likely to face a major political challenge within Parliament in Baidoa.

MALAC